

RESEARCH STUDY

# Ready for Launch

How to Achieve a Transformative Executive Development Experience

WHAT WE THINK

## So you have been offered a one-on-one leadership development experience. Now what?

What follows is practical, actionable guidance for senior executives based on extensive research with our seasoned consultants.

By querying our consultants, we sought to generate better understanding of the active ingredients of a successful leadership development engagement. We were particularly focused on what constitutes success for the individual executive.

We sought to generate answers for questions such as: What behaviors differentiate successful executives in an executive development engagement? Where do executives fail when it comes to fully benefiting from an individual leadership development experience? What gets in the way of a successful engagement? What are “best practice” behaviors executives can aim for?

As management psychologists and consultants working at the top leadership level, we provide laser-focused, game-changing insights on the nuances of leadership.

Through our research, we offer insights and “watch-outs” alike for you to be “ready for launch” during your development engagement. Our findings are broken down into the following:

- Key Differentiators: Behavioral differentiators between those who maximize the impact of their engagement and those who do not.

- Common Barriers: Six primary obstacles you may face during the experience.
- Getting There: A checklist of the principles to adopt during your engagement.

**Working with a leadership development consultant can be a transformative step.**



## The Key Differentiators

Our research revealed key behavioral attributes of those who maximize the impact of coaching versus those who do not. We detail the most important differentiators below, providing target behaviors to demonstrate during your development engagement—and conversely, what not to do.

### Receptive and Open-Minded

*Earnestly embraces insights and feedback. Takes accountability. Curious and humble.*



### Defensive and Closed-Minded

*Resists or denigrates feedback. Argumentative or dismissive of insights. Blames others.*

### Change Oriented

*Ready and eager for change. Hungry for improvement and ready to do the work required.*



### Change-Averse

*Afraid. Subtly or overtly avoidant of participating in hard work required to achieve lasting change.*

### Engaged & Participative

*Committed and proactive. Focused and goal oriented. Embraces self-discovery and behavior change.*



### Distracted & Passive

*Unfocused. Apathetic and/or passive regarding coaching and the prospect of behavior change. Unwilling to engage.*

### Trusting

*Trusting of the purpose of development, the consultant, and the process. Believes and buys in.*



### Guarded

*Suspicious. Unwilling or unable to fully trust and be vulnerable. Lacks belief in coaching.*

### Introspective & Self-Aware

*Reflective about strengths and weaknesses. Sees self through others' eyes. Capable of understanding impact on others.*



### Un-Insightful

*Lacks interpersonal awareness. Unwilling to take others' perspective. Cannot see how one's behaviors can land in unintended ways.*

## You'll Know It When You See It: Common Barriers

Most executives encounter obstacles during their individual executive development experience. Our research surfaced six common barriers for executives to look out for. We also include insights on how the most high-performing executives get past these barriers.



### ***“I’m too busy.”***

During an engagement, executives can reach a point where they feel they “just don’t have time” for coaching. Day-to-day priorities and firefighting can often carry the day, leaving little time to spend on leadership development. However, our research found the highest-performing executives frame coaching less as a “time spend” and more as a “time investment.” They trust that the short-term time investment leads to returns that can have long-lasting positive effects for their life and leadership.



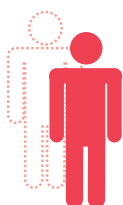
### ***“I’m not sure this will work.”***

At some point during an executive development engagement, it is very natural for executives to question whether it will work. Changing behaviors that have contributed to one’s career success can feel uncomfortable and uncertain. Shifting deep-seated behaviors also takes time; it cannot be undone in a few months. The highest-performing executives trust the process, are realistic about the pace of change, and voice doubts with their consultant.



### ***“I don’t need more guidance.”***

Some executives see initial signs of progress and think they have everything figured out. Changing fundamental behaviors is an iterative process that takes time; many executives do not progress as quickly as they would like to think. Best practices to combat this include (1) continually soliciting feedback, (2) identifying triggers for bad behaviors, and (3) being reflective and honest about where progress still needs to be made.



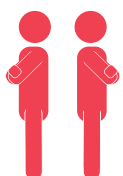
### ***“I have no support.”***

Occasionally, executives feel they are not getting the support they need from their organization. Demands that take them away from personal development, an unengaged manager, and/or a culture that does not foster development are all examples. The highest-performing executives are direct with their managers about the support they need. They also lean on their coach and surrounding social networks more heavily.



### ***“I have nowhere to practice.”***







Some executives do not want to practice recommended behavioral changes at work. This is because experimenting with new behaviors could result in failure, ultimately damaging a reputation. Venues outside the office, including volunteer, alumni, and/or professional organizations, are places to consider practicing. As an added bonus, these options give you the opportunity to donate your time/expertise to benefit your community.



### ***“I’m not connecting with my consultant.”***

A productive relationship is based on high levels of trust, understanding, and chemistry. There are occasions where the chemistry just isn’t right between an executive and a coach. If after a few months you still feel this way, you should surface this concern with your consultant and consider making a change.

## Getting There: A Checklist

	<b>Personally Invest</b> To achieve the positive outcomes associated with executive development, you must personally invest in the experience and wholeheartedly commit to the process. Developing trust and being willing to be vulnerable with your consultant is key.
	<b>Accept Feedback</b> You cannot shy away from tough conversations and “real” feedback. Successfully accepting and integrating feedback is a critical ingredient for change. It is not always fun. And it doesn’t matter if you disagree with the feedback; others’ perception of you is their reality that you must work to change. You have a choice: feedback can be fought and discounted, or accepted, embraced, and acted upon.
	<b>Set Clear and Actionable Goals</b> A substantial body of research points to the importance of having clear, measurable goals to successfully and sustainably achieve behavior change. If you don’t know what you are shooting for, how can you possibly expect to attain success?
	<b>Involve Key Stakeholders</b> Research also suggests that broadcasting goals and objectives helps you follow through on them. Also, by engaging others, you can better garner their support and buy-in on what you are trying to accomplish. They too can provide feedback, or “keep you honest” when they see you failing to live up to your objectives.
	<b>Do Your Homework</b> The most successful engagements are those where the executive works outside the individual consultant meetings. The majority of progress occurs when your consultant is not even around. So, work on your development continuously—with guidance from your coach when you need it. And come prepared to your coaching session to make the most of your time.
	<b>Provide Feedback</b> While it may feel like your consultant is providing all of the feedback, you should provide feedback too. If he/she is doing something that is helpful, tell them. Even more important, if you are not getting what you need, say so. Tell your consultant how you prefer to be engaged; be up front and honest about this. Help your consultant help you.

### ABOUT RHR INTERNATIONAL

RHR International LLP is an independent, global firm of management psychologists and consultants who understand the distinctive challenges and pressures that CEOs, board directors, and senior executives face. Its singular focus on senior leadership effectiveness, business outcomes, and research-based practice sets it apart from other executive and organizational development consultancies. For more than 70 years, RHR has been helping leaders and their teams transform themselves and, in turn, the performance of their organizations. RHR offers Board & CEO Services, Senior Team Effectiveness, Leading Transformational Change, Executive Development, and Executive Assessment. For more information, visit [rhrinternational.com](http://rhrinternational.com).

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